

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

221145Z Jun 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 ABU DHABI 002833

SIPDIS

STATE FOR G, G/TIP, INL, DRL, NEA/RA AND NEA/ARPI
STATE ALSO PASS TO USTR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/21/2010

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [ETRD](#) [TC](#)

SUBJECT: UAE PROGRESS ON TIP ACTION PLAN

REF: A. STATE 107921

[B](#). STATE 99833

[C](#). STATE 98157

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Since receiving the TIP report and mini-action plan from us on June 1, the UAE Government has made steady progress in addressing the suggested steps in the plan. Ministry of Interior police continue to identify and rescue underage camel jockeys. Government social workers working side-by-side with UNICEF officials are providing care for former camel jockeys in government-run shelters while the children await humane repatriation to their home countries. The number of repatriations has risen. The federal Cabinet approved June 13 the draft camel jockey law that will equip the UAE courts with the enforcement tools necessary to prosecute trafficking cases. The law bans child camel jockeys under age 18, in keeping with ILO standards. The Ministry of Interior has closed all camel racing areas and has assigned police patrols to the racetracks to enforce the ban during this period. And in Dubai, a new emirate-level labor committee has set up a hotline and website for use by domestic workers and laborers who want to lodge complaints about their employers. End Summary.

[2](#). (C) In the three weeks since we delivered the TIP report and mini-action plan to senior UAEG officials, Embassy Abu Dhabi and Consulate General Dubai officers have been proactively raising the trafficking in persons issue with a broad range of federal and emirate-level official interlocutors. In our discussions, we continually remind our contacts that the UAEG has until August 2 to demonstrate that it is making "significant efforts" to bring the UAE into compliance with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking in persons, or it will stay at Tier 3. We have also informed the UAEG that G/TIP reports officer Feleke Assefa will be returning to the UAE in early July to reassess the UAEG's efforts, and that we are interested in having him meet with interlocutors who can provide him with evidence of action plan progress. Without exception, senior government contacts continue to tell us that the six steps in the action plan are "doable" by August 2. Ibrahim Al Abed, adviser to Information Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, told Pol Chief June 12 that the UAE leadership understands that the USG will reward action, not talk, when it comes to the trafficking issue.

[3](#). (U) On June 13, the Cabinet approved a camel jockey decree prohibiting the trafficking, employment, and training of anyone under the age of 18 in camel activities. Article Three of the law states that any person who violates the law will be sentenced to a maximum of three years in prison and/or will be fined a minimum of 50,000 Dirhams (\$13,500). On June 20, the federal Cabinet approved a joint agreement on the protection of underage camel jockeys that the Ministry of Interior and UNICEF had signed on May 8. The press reported that after the UAEG had announced in mid-March that it would ban the use of children under the age of 16 as camel jockeys, Stefan Toma, UNICEF's representative for the Gulf area, wrote a letter to Deputy Prime Minister and MinState for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamdan stating, "The UAE has always been one of the pioneering states in the Gulf in the field of social development. We at UNICEF are very pleased to see that the UAE is taking such an important step on an important regional issue of child exploitation." Sheikh Hamdan had noted that violations of the Camel Racing Federation's rules banning the use of children as jockeys "have harmed the objectives of the sport, and have been in breach of the legal structure on which the UAE is based, whether in terms of its domestic legislation or in terms of its obligation under the terms of various international conventions and agreements."

[4](#). (C) The following is a review of progress made on each of the six steps suggested in the mini-action plan to date. We are continuing to encourage additional progress from our UAEG interlocutors, particularly on the trafficking of women for the purposes of sexual exploitation and the trafficking of domestic workers and laborers:

NATIONAL COORDINATOR

-- The UAEG has yet to appoint a national coordinator to oversee implementation of the action plan, although we have been assured that this will be announced shortly.

IDENTIFICATION AND PROTECTION FOR CAMEL JOCKEYS

-- Immediately after the May 31 grace period expired for camel farm owners to register the young boys they employed as camel jockeys, the Ministry of Interior's Anti-Infiltration Unit began deploying its forces to the camel farms (primarily in Abu Dhabi emirate). In the first few days, the police unit was able to locate and "rescue" up to 15 boys per day, Anti-Infiltration Unit Director Col. Fadl told Pol Chief.

-- With the assistance of UNICEF social workers and statisticians, the Ministry of Interior has also begun the task of identifying the boys and providing them with protective services at the two camel jockey rehabilitation centers in Abu Dhabi. These services include shelter, food, clothing, medical and psychological care, and basic education. Social and medical workers are developing case files for each child in an attempt to establish family ties, employment and medical histories, and other information that will ultimately assist the UAEG repatriate the boys to their home countries, and to help the local governments and NGOs in those countries to provide reintegration services to the boys. NEA PDAS Cheney will tour the Camel Jockey Rehabilitation Center on her upcoming visit, at the invitation of the UAEG.

-- Approximately 270 boys who had been working on camel farms have been taken into the Ministry of Interior's custody and housed in the two camel jockey shelters, according to Lt. Col. Najm Sayyar, director of the Ministry of Interior's Social Support Center in Abu Dhabi. The majority are Pakistanis. The remainder are Bangladeshis, Sudanese, Mauritanian, and one Eritrean. Sayyar took issue with the TIP report's figures of child camel jockeys, telling "Gulf News" June 9 that the UAEG believes the numbers involved are "much lower than those cited in the U.S. State Department report." He challenged those who claimed to have other figures to reveal their sources so that the Ministry of Interior can evaluate their accuracy. Sayyar promised complete documentation on all children involved in camel racing in the UAE "soon." According to a preliminary survey by the UAE Ministry of Interior, there are 3,000 child camel jockeys in the UAE, of which 2,000 are Pakistanis.

-- The Pakistani Ambassador informed us that 100 boys would be repatriated to Lahore at UAEG expense by the end of this week, including a batch of 22 on June 21. "Gulf News" reported the return on June 22. The boys, the majority of whom were escorted by a parent or guardian, were met by the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau set up by Pakistan's Punjab Government, and a UNICEF office representative in Pakistan. Local authorities will trace the parents of the children and provide assistance for their rehabilitation, including free education in schools at the government's expense. The bureau can accommodate 250 children, said its chairperson, Dr. Faiza Asghar, who met in early June with UAE Ministry of Interior and UNICEF officials in Abu Dhabi to coordinate the repatriation. "Right now we don't know anything about their families, but we will try our best to trace them," she told "Gulf News." Senator Tariq Asim Khan, State Minister for Overseas Pakistanis, also met with UAE Interior Minister Sheikh Saif in May.

-- The head of the Dubai Human Rights Care Department, Dr. Col. Mohammed Al Murr, told Acting Consul General and Poloff June 22 that many of the young camel jockeys who are in the UAE with their families had started departing voluntarily after they had heard about the new camel jockey legislation.

-- The Ministry of Interior has closed all camel racing areas and has assigned police patrols to the racetracks to enforce the ban during this period. (Note: The official camel racing season is scheduled to resume in October.)

-- The Ministry of Interior's Social Support Center has publicized hotline numbers for persons to call who have information about kidnapped children brought to the UAE.

INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION

-- The federal Cabinet's approval last week of the draft camel jockey law means that the UAE courts will soon have the enforcement tools to commence prosecutions of traffickers. Pol Chief met with Ministry of Information advisers Ibrahim Al Abed and Peter Hellyer June 12 to make the point that having a camel jockey law on the books was important, but that enforcing the law and prosecuting cases was going to be

even more important in the reassessment of the UAE's Tier 3 status. We have emphasized to the Ministries of Interior, Information, and Foreign Affairs, and to the Minister of Supreme Council and GCC Affairs Sheikh Fahim Al Qasimi, that the USG will expect to see prosecutions as listed in the TIP action plan regardless of nationality.

-- Minister of Labor Al Kaabi told Ambassador June 21 that his Ministry currently has 80 labor inspectors, and the Ministry has requested funding for additional inspectors to follow up on complaints by workers and to conduct random checks of labor conditions at work sites.

-- Dubai officers will receive special investigative training on how to detect leads and follow up trafficking cases.

MECHANISM FOR IDENTIFICATION AND PROTECTION OF VICTIMS

-- There has been no progress on developing a mechanism for the identification and protection of victims to date. Acting Consul General and Poloff learned June 22 that the Criminal Investigation Division's prostitution unit will be transferred to the Dubai Police Human Rights Care Department, and the unit would add trafficking to its responsibilities.

-- Progress has been made on expanding the availability of hotlines for foreign workers to report instances of abuse. A new Dubai labor committee under the supervision of Dubai Immigration chief, Brig. General Saeed bin Beleilah, is working on setting up a Dubai-wide labor complaints Website and hotline, which will include the ability for domestic workers and laborers to lodge complaints. The Website has gone live, and in about three weeks the committee will launch a \$540,000 public awareness campaign to let workers know about this mechanism and introduce the Website and hotline. The campaign will include television and print ads, as well as pamphlets and brochures to be distributed at labor camps and elsewhere. Workers will be able to file a complaint, arrange an appointment with the Dubai Labor Committee, and track progress online and through a call center (which is already up and running inside the Immigration building). The labor committee is hiring three lawyers to represent complainants. Laborers and domestic workers will not have to pay any legal fees. The Website is currently in Arabic and English, but there are plans to provide the service in other languages.

-- Labor Minister Al Kaabi told Ambassador June 21 that the Ministry of Labor had determined that it was more efficient to have workers use a Website than a hotline when filing a labor complaint because of the large number of Internet cafes and other Internet access across the UAE. Complaints can either be sent to alkaabi@mol.gov.ae or through the Ministry's Website at www.mol.gov.ae. Website users wishing to provide feedback and suggestions need to enter their names and contact information, as well as any comments. There is also a link on the "Procedures Guide" where users can read about the steps for filing a complaint. The user completes the complaint form, attaches a copy of his/her identification and labor card, and goes to the reception counter at the Labor Ministry to submit the papers and obtain an appointment. The person has to be sponsored by the company he/she is complaining about. Complaints go to the Administration Department director who forwards the cases to legal advisors.

ESTABLISHING SHELTERS; FORMAL PROTECTION

-- The Ministry of Interior is operating two Camel Jockey Rehabilitation Centers in Abu Dhabi emirate. The first opened in December 2004 and is located on the Zayed Military City army base. The second opened in May 2005 and is located adjacent to a youth correctional facility in the Abu Dhabi suburb of Al Mafrag. As of June 9, there were 197 boys living in the centers. The UAEG is providing medical and mental health care, basic education, food, clothing, and sports activities. The Ministry of Interior's Social Support Center social workers, in collaboration with UNICEF workers, are compiling files on each of the boys documenting their employment history, medical problems, and to the extent possible, their family ties. When the children are repatriated to their home countries, their files will follow them to ensure follow-up care by local NGOs.

-- The Indian Community Welfare Committee (ICWC) has set up a new shelter for destitute Indian women in Dubai and the Northern Emirates. This is the second shelter in Dubai for Indian women; the ICWC set up the first one four years ago. Both shelters are managed in coordination with the Indian consulate, and house runaway maids and women rescued from forced prostitution. Dubai Emirate authorities are coordinating and cooperating with the shelters. For example, Dubai Immigration assists by waiving the normal fees levied on travelers without passports or who have overstayed their

visa validity period. The Indian Consul General forwards information about the women to the Dubai police for use in investigations.

-- Talks between Dubai Police and Dubai developer Emaar Properties to build two shelters for trafficking victims have progressed and the paperwork is now with the head of Dubai police, Al Murr of the Human Rights Care Department said.

PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

-- At the Ministry of Information, which will also play a role in developing a public awareness campaign on the trafficking issue, Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed has instructed his staff to comb through the TIP mini-action plan (ref B) and TIP report to understand what the UAE needs to do by August 2 to bring itself into compliance with the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). Ibrahim Al Abed, Sheikh Abdullah's media adviser and the director of the Emirates News Agency, called the Embassy June 12 requesting a copy of the TVPA. The UAEG's research on the TVPA, and on ILO labor standards, particularly the employment of children under 18 in hazardous work, prompted the decision by the Cabinet to amend the draft camel jockey law by raising the minimum age for jockeys from 16 to 18 (ref A).

-- On June 16, semi-official Arabic "Al Ittihad" published an article about the Cabinet's decision to approve the camel jockey law. The article explained that the law prohibited the trafficking, employment, and training of anyone under the age of 18 in camel activities, and noted that procedures for bringing underage camel jockeys to the UAE were being canceled. The report also explained that Article Three of the law stipulates that any person who violates the law will be sentenced to a maximum of three years in prison and/or will be fined a minimum of 50,000 Dirhams (\$13,500).

-- The two major English dailies "Gulf News" (GN) and "Khaleej Times" (KT) have published several articles about the challenges facing domestic workers and laborers, and the UAEG's role in addressing these challenges:

-- GN June 6: The Ministry of Labor formed a committee to try to resolve the case of 200 Asian workers who protested non-payment of wages.

-- KT June 10: Medical doctors call for a law banning construction work in the summer afternoons, citing incidents of heat stroke.

-- KT June 11: The number of maids who abscond from their abusive employers is increasing. Domestic workers are caught, jailed, and deported, while sponsors are seldom punished.

-- GN June 11: Account of a Filipino worker who had not been paid for two months after being promised a substantially higher wage. The Labor Ministry summoned him to the Ministry to resolve his case.

-- KT June 16: The Ministry of Labor will inspect and penalize companies that violate occupational safety rules in a move to protect laborers from health hazards, such as working outdoors for long hours during the summer.

-- KT June 19: The Ministry of Labor intervened in the case of 20 Asian laborers who stopped working to protest their poor living conditions and non-payment of wages. A Ministry official told the laborers that the labor camp would be inspected and back wages paid.

UNICEF Role in Rehabilitating and Repatriating Jockeys

15. (U) UNICEF, meanwhile, has been assisting the Ministry of Interior with the time-consuming process of "mapping" the camel jockey population. The goal is to learn as much as possible about the children's families, cultures, and employment background so that they can be properly rehabilitated, then repatriated to their home countries, where they will receive reintegration services from local NGOs. UNICEF has been providing technical support to establish a database in the Ministry of Interior's Social Support Center in Abu Dhabi that will keep a record of all children who have been properly registered. Each child's file will follow him to his home country for the follow-up care.

16. (SBU) UNICEF offices in the three principal source countries for camel jockeys) Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sudan - are finalizing action plans of their own that include arrangements with the local governments for sending the boys home and ensuring the children get reintegrated well with their families and societies, UNICEF regional representative June Kunugi told Pol Chief June 12. "Things are starting to fall in place. It takes a while to coordinate all this," she

added. Under the UNICEF-Ministry of Interior project agreement signed May 8, the child jockeys will receive aid for their health, education, job, and other rehabilitation needs for two years. More than 80 percent of the \$2.7 million fund established by the UAEG to help eradicate the problem of underage camel jockeys is allocated for the follow-up care in the home countries.

17. (SBU) UNICEF representatives have discussed with the Ministry of Interior their concern that the repatriation process not be expedited for the sake of showing better results to the international community. The welfare of the children must be the guiding operating principle, Kunugi said. Kunugi said UNICEF wants to ensure that there is a full case history and file on each child before he is repatriated. "We don't want children going back to their home countries without the full support they deserve," Kunugi said. The more than 200 children who were repatriated to their home countries prior to the MOI-UNICEF project commencing could potentially benefit from the follow-up care. Kunugi said the challenge for UNICEF offices, local governments, and NGOs is to locate the children who have gone home to the source countries.

Comment:

18. (C) The UAEG is off to a good start in trying to address each of the steps in the TIP action plan. The leadership tells us that it is committed to getting results. While progress is being made to address the trafficking of children as camel jockeys, we will need to continue encouraging additional steps on the other forms of human trafficking.
SISON